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# What America's New Merchant Marine Means to the World

By EDWARD N. HURLEY

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**T**HE world was never before in such desperate need of raw materials supplied through overseas tonnage as it is today. The need of the hour is SHIPS.

After four years of unexampled privation brought on and fostered by the ruthless destruction of merchant ships on the one side, and a blockade of the seas that gave way only for vessels freighted with munitions of war, food and other supplies to uphold the strength of the Allied nations on the other side, the period of readjustment and rehabilitation is at hand.

This period of intensive demand is not a passing flurry to call for momentary attention and then pass on among the forgotten troubles of a day. The workers of the world must buckle down to long years of hard labor to replenish supplies, to repair damage done and set the old globe up in business again as a going concern. And this will require SHIPS—MORE SHIPS.

The great demand is for raw materials, chiefly foodstuffs. The cry for food is insistent. In this crisis the United States takes high place. The creation of her new merchant marine, born of the breath of war, now finds an exalted usage in the succor of starving and desolate peoples, most of them innocent victims of the ravages of war.

Because we had no delivery system of our own upon the seas our seaports began to choke with our own products before the war was a month old. The sudden close of the war brought the same congestion, withdrawal and reallocation to old trade routes of ships that had been ferrying our goods across the Atlantic. But the force of this blow, which might have proved a staggering one under old conditions, has been almost entirely taken up by the shock absorber of our new-built merchant marine. The situation has been saved by SHIPS.

This is what happened when war was declared across the sea:

An accumulation of freight brought on congestion at our seaports. There were no ships to carry our exports. The demands and exigencies of war called them from our shores. We were the most powerful of all the neutral nations. But we had practically no overseas shipping of our own and our commerce had to depend almost entirely on ships of alien flags—a dependence that failed us at the first note of war.

It was but natural that those in control of ships under foreign register should place their own war necessities above the demands of our trade. We could only stand helpless and watch the products of our farms and our stockyards pile up on piers and in warehouses while prices fell at an appalling rate. The cause of all this was the lack of SHIPS.

With the signing of the armistice and the cessation of hostilities our seaboard terminals once more began to choke with the products of the farm and stockyard, mine, mill and factory. It was the same story over again. The Allies, no longer dependent upon American armies and American war materials for their national safety, suddenly withdrew many of their best ships from the American trade. American business, therefore, was immediately thrown upon its own resources. It looked like a hard winter. But we missed the jolt and are coming safely through the period of readjustment. The pull that brought us out of that hole was furnished by OUR OWN SHIPS.

Anyone could safely predict that the war would come to a sudden end. But no one could say when that end would be. When it did come it found the grain and meat storage terminals of the seaboard and Great Lakes filled to overflowing with an unprecedented accumulation of American foodstuffs. According to the records of the Department of Agriculture there were in storage on November 1, 350,000,000 bushels of grain, 250,000,000 pounds of dairy products, and nearly 1,000,000,000 pounds of meats. Had the American merchant marine not been on hand to move these products the consequent crash in prices would have been a terrible blow not only to the American producer but to the raw materials market of the world.

The ships of our new merchant marine have been moving our surplus wheat crop, estimated at 450,000,000 bushels, at the rate of 36,000,000 bushels a month. This is an export movement

50 per cent greater than the average for the eleven months ending November, 1918, and for the entire year of 1917.

On the first of February the requirements of the newly organized European food relief service, as announced to the Shipping Board through the Food Administration, called for the immediate export, chiefly to European neutrals, of half a million tons of American flour, pork products and milk, and of a quarter million tons of various foodstuffs for Belgium. The December and January programs for Belgium relief totaled another half million tons of foodstuffs. It was expected that foreign shipping would be available to carry a considerable share of this tremendous quantity of American foodstuffs, but so many of the foreign ships returned to their ante-bellum trade routes immediately after the armistice was signed, that the bulk of the task fell to our new merchant marine.

Of a total of 1,200,000 tons of foodstuffs for relief purposes exported up to March 1, more than 80 per cent was carried in American vessels, and with few exceptions, in cargo carriers built in American shipyards during the past year. All told the new merchant marine provided for the export of more than 1,500,000 tons of the surplus farm products of the country in the four months following the signing of the armistice with the requirements of the army accounting for between 2,500,000 and 3,500,000 deadweight tons of our merchant fleet.

These record-breaking accomplishments have been due to the energies of American shipbuilders who in little more than a year and a half built more than double the number of launching ways than are now owned by all other nations combined, and are building more shipping than is being constructed by all the rest of the world put together.

There is no reason to believe that we are building too many ships. There are many good reasons to prove that we are not. The need for ships was never so great as it is at present and this demand will continue for many years—will last until the world catches up with the tonnage it requires for the purpose of its normal commerce.

The shortage in world tonnage due to the war can be placed by conservative estimate at 16,245,000 gross tons. This figure represents eight times the total of seagoing ships built in the

United States in the last year. The record of superproduction of ship tonnage is unprecedented in shipping annals. And the normal tonnage of the world which the upbuilding of our merchant marine will help to restore was adapted to the simple commercial needs of civilization and not to the additional task of restoration and rehabilitation of the destructive forces of war—the added problem of today.

The whole world is short of raw materials. Factories the world over are being restored to the production of articles adapted, not to the needs of war, but of peace. Discharged soldiers will be employed and women brought into industry will remain. The output of manufactured commodities will be great. The world will experience the largest movement of raw materials that it has ever known and a consequent movement of manufactured goods. The need of tonnage for overseas shipping is evident.

Our merchant marine is stronger today than ever before. It is growing faster than it ever grew before. The faster we build ships the greater will be our independence. We lead all other nations in agriculture. We are the world's greatest producer of raw materials. There is one way that we can best serve ourselves and humanity through the distribution of our plenty. It can be expressed in one word: SHIPS.